

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for assessing construction work for a building which incorporates a plurality of building elements, said system comprising:

a medium displaying a plurality of indica, each representing one of the building elements;

5 a data input device for selecting one of the plurality of indica and producing a signal that indicates the selected one of the plurality of indica; and

a portable computer connected to the data input device and comprising a storage device, a processor and output device, the portable computer responding to the signal from the data input device by storing in the storage device an designation  
10 of a given building element corresponding to the selected one of the plurality of indica.

2. The system as recited in claim 1 wherein:

the storage device contains a data table having a plurality of entries with each one corresponding to one of the plurality of building elements and indicating a cost of that one building element;

5 the processor is connected to the storage device and responding to the signal from the data input device by obtaining the cost of the given building element and utilizing that cost to determine a total cost of construction for the building, and

the output device producing an output signal indicating the total cost of construction.

3. The system as recited in claim 2 wherein each of the plurality of indicators encodes a number, and the portable computer uses a number received from the data input device to select a cost contained in the data table.

4. The system as recited in claim 1 wherein the data input device comprises a barcode reader; and the plurality of indicators are barcodes.

5. The system as recited in claim 4 wherein each of the barcodes encodes a numerical value and the portable computer uses a numerical value received from the barcode reader to select an entry in the data table.

6. The system as recited in claim 1 wherein the signal from the data input device designates a given command, and the processor responds to the signal by executing the given command.

7. A method for estimating cost of damage to a building which has a plurality of building elements, said method comprising:

- (a) providing, at the building, a portable computer having a storage device that stores a data table containing a cost for each of the plurality of building elements,  
5 and an input device connected to the portable computer;
- (b) identifying a given building element that is damaged;
- (c) at the building, utilizing the input device to designate the given building element and producing a signal indicating the given building element;
- (d) the portable computer utilizing the signal to access the data table and  
10 obtain the cost of the given building element
- (e) the portable computer employing the cost of the given building element to calculate a total cost of damage to the building;
- (f) repeating steps (b) through (e) for other building elements that were damaged; and
- 15 (g) producing an output signal from the output device that indicates the total cost of damage to the building.

8. The method as recited in claim 7 further comprises providing a medium displaying a plurality of indica each of which represents one of the building elements; and wherein utilizing the input device comprises selecting one of the plurality of indica that designates the given building element and the signal indicates  
5 that selected indicium.

9. The method as recited in claim 8 wherein the plurality of indicia are barcodes; and utilizing an input device comprises utilizing a barcode reader.

10. The method as recited in claim 7 further comprising providing a plurality of barcodes designating commands that are executable by the portable computer; and scanning the barcodes with a barcode reader to provide a signal to the portable computer indicating a command to be executed.

11. The method as recited in claim 7 wherein utilizing an input device comprises selecting an icon on a display screen of the portable computer.

12. The method as recited in claim 7 wherein utilizing an input device comprises speaking into a microphone.

13. The method as recited in claim 12 further comprising the portable computer executing a speech recognition program that converts the signal from the microphone into data for accessing the data table in the storage device.

14. The method as recited in claim 7 further comprising multiplying the cost for the given building element by a quantity of the given building element that were damaged to produce an element cost; and wherein the element cost is utilized to calculate the total cost of damage to the building.

15. The method as recited in claim 7 further comprises storing information regarding given building elements designated by the input device; and wherein the output signal produced from the output device also indicates that information.

16. The method as recited in claim 15 wherein the information regarding the given building elements designated by the input device is organized by areas of the building where the given building elements are located.

17. The method as recited in claim 15 wherein the information regarding the given building elements designated by the input device is organized by rooms of the building where the given building elements are located.

18. The method as recited in claim 7 wherein the information regarding the given building elements designated by the input device is organized categories of building elements.

19. The method as recited in claim 7 further comprising producing cost subtotals for a plurality of categories of building elements.

20. The method as recited in claim 7 wherein providing the portable computer comprises assigning a record number to the cost for each of the plurality of building elements, in which the record number indicates a location of that cost in the data table; and the signal from the input device designates the record number  
5 assigned to the given building element.

21. A method for estimating a value for a building comprising a plurality of building elements, said method comprising:

(a) providing, at the building, a portable computer having a storage device that stores a data table containing a value for each of the plurality of building elements,  
5 and an input device connected to the portable computer;

(b) at the building utilizing the input device to produce a signal designating a given building element which is present in the building;

(c) the portable computer utilizing the signal to access the data table and obtain the value of the given building element;

10 (d) employing the value of the given building element to calculate a total value for the building;

(e) repeating steps (b) through (d) for additional building elements; and

(f) producing an output signal from the output device that indicates the total value for the building.

22. The method as recited in claim 21 further comprises providing a medium displaying a plurality of indica each representing one of the plurality of building elements; and wherein utilizing a input device comprises selecting one of the plurality of indica that designates the given building element and the signal  
5 indicates that selected indicium.

23. The method as recited in claim 22 wherein the a plurality of indica are barcodes; and utilizing a input device comprises utilizing a barcode reader.

24. The method as recited in claim 21 wherein providing the portable computer comprises assigning a record number to the value for each of the plurality of building elements, in which the record number indicates a location of that value in the data table; and the signal from the input device designates the record number

5 assigned to the given building element.